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ABSTRACT

The Teacher Center at Portland Community College was established for several reasons. First, driving between campus and the out-of-town sites for student teacher supervision was too costly for Oregon State University faculty. Secondly, it was thought that the preparation of teachers should include experiences in schools outside a single local area and educational system. It also seemed advantageous to provide a program in an urban and suburban area in order to give veteran teachers in the field more input than they had previously into the training of new teachers, teacher aides, and in-service personnel. School districts located near to the community college center were included in the organizational design. These schools are learning laboratories for teacher aides, paraprofessionals, student teachers, resident teachers and other students participating in education related field experience programs. (Author)

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# A NEW DIMENSION TO THE TEACHER CENTER CONCEPT: A UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP WITH A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by Shelby L. Price and John H. Baker

If teachers and the trainers of teachers are going to meet the challenges of education in a complicated and pluralistic society, some of the old patterns of teacher education must be broken.

Those icons, particularly susceptible to the breakage are isolating teacher education into single disciplines, centering education into the geographic confines of the university campus, maintaining the gap between theory and practice, and continuing the practice of "the self-contained university" concept.

The call has been issued. (Hinkemeyer, 1972) in discussing various departures in teacher preparation in the present chaotic age, says that there is promise if "Chaos Equals Flexibility." He adds that "the students and professors should be working in the school community at least 25% of the time available, and hopefully more. Cooperative activity is mandatory, lest professional fraticide turn crisis into disaster."

(Willems and Brown, 1972) state that the times and needs of more relevant experiences for future teachers are driving colleges and universities, public schools and state departments of education into "deeper and deeper complementary relationships." The teaching

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centers are given validity for their assists in better resource use and, particularly, in narrowing the gap between theory and practice.

A teacher education center can better serve education because those involved in the overall process are joined in "Group Identity" and in the group efforts (Merritt, 1972).

(Pilcher, 1973) believes teacher centers are sound because they're based on some basic truths:

1. Fundamental educational reform will come only through those charged with the basic educational responsibility, to wit, the teachers.
2. Teachers are unlikely to change their ways simply because imperious theoretical reformers tell them to shape up.
3. Teachers will take reform seriously only when they are responsible for defining their own educational problems, delineating their own needs, and receiving help on their own terms and turf.

One new joint university and community college teacher education program that touches some critical, contemporary needs has been initiated by the School of Education at Oregon State University and Portland Community College with the working cooperation of local school districts and Intermediate Education Districts. The program offers training for para-professionals and future teachers.

Portland (Oregon) Community College holds the philosophical position that educational opportunity should be diversified and open

to all. Consequently, when a plan was born at Oregon State University to offer para-educational opportunities using the community college flexibility, the program was quickly set in motion.

An education center was developed at the community college, staffed by a team from Portland (Oregon) Community College, Multnomah and Washington County Intermediate Education Districts, and Oregon State University.

The tasks of this professional team include:

1. To develop and implement a para-professional training program. This career ladder approach enables students to step off of any rung to take a position in a school system commensurate with their level of training or to complete pre-professional work along with field experiences so that they are qualified to transfer to a teacher education program at a college or university.
2. To provide supervision for the student teachers from the university who are culminating their university program in the Portland metropolitan area (90 miles from the Oregon State University campus).
3. To assess the needs for graduate in-service work for teachers in the metropolitan area and to develop in-service programs for these teachers and/or school systems.

It was obvious to all the cooperating partners that this broader approach to teacher preparation was critical. Students were coming to the college of their choice as one might go to an island retreat. Except for periodic forays home or abroad for vacations, students have been isolated within their school and by the restriction of methodology. Most often the student teacher candidate who is ready for his field experience gets out only as far as the "local" school for his observations, block programs, student teaching or special education.

In Oregon the bulk of the population is located in the Willamette Valley, which is about 100 miles long and 40 wide. However, economic and geographic diversity in the remainder of the state presents opportunities for prospective teachers and educational aides to prepare beyond the three population centers of the valley. Even in the valley, there is enough diversity of opportunity and need to warrant cooperative, convergent, educational activity.

Geography has too often a limiting factor; consequently, numerous constrictions have been imposed upon the development of the self as a teacher-person and upon the wider variety of educational and future teacher challenges which exist in the wider world.

The Center at Portland Community College was established to accomplish several objectives. Conceived out of realistic need,

the driving time between campus and out-of-town student-teacher supervision was too costly for university faculty, in both time and money. Secondly, the preparation of teachers should include experiences in schools outside of one local area and educational system. It also seemed advantageous to provide a program in an urban and suburban area in order to give veteran teachers in the field more input into the training of new teachers, teacher aides, and in-service personnel than they had previously.

As the plan developed, other positive factors came to light. Students who couldn't afford a distant college or weren't ready for the four year program, could attend the local community college and begin working on a career in education.

During 1971-72, the first year of the program, the professional staff supervised Oregon State University student teachers who had been placed in the Portland metropolitan area. The staff also planned and developed the para-professional program. During this current and second year of operation, the professional staff is continuing their supervision of student teachers, implementing the previously developed para-professional program and assessing the needs for professional educational in-service. In the 1973-74 academic year, the staff will fully implement all three phases of the program.

School districts located near to the community college center are included in the organizational design. These schools are the

learning laboratories for teacher aides, para-professionals, student teachers, resident teachers, and other students participating in education-related field experience programs.

The Teacher Education Center at Portland Community College provides the opportunity for students from different educational, socio-economic, and racial backgrounds to become involved. Student teaching and field experiences occur in different educational settings, i.e., in suburban areas, in urban areas, or in rural areas near the metropolitan center. A wide variety of experiences are important in the teacher training process.

If counselors or instructors at the community college are interested or concerned with particular programs on the Oregon State University campus, this information can be acquired from the Oregon State University instructor on location there. OSU credit classes are offered in the Portland area. At the same time, the Portland Community College based OSU instructor is able to learn more about the educational programs in the community college. Evidence shows that this transference of information is occurring. This kind of communication between the four year institutions and the community colleges is something that has been an ongoing need for a long time and will hopefully develop further articulation.

Certainly another important aspect of this arrangement gives student teachers from the university the chance to do their student teaching in an area that has greater employment potential.

And, the local schools have more known candidates from which to choose for regular teaching positions.

In some respects this program has precedent. Visiting professors, cooperative education ventures, the decentralization of campuses and non-campus oriented study have all been attempts to help education yield the most for societal and student needs. This particular program offers realistic possibilities for better prepared teachers without the expenditure of additional monies.

The teacher education center concept places considerably more responsibility for teacher education on the public schools and professional organizations. It also demonstrates the willingness of the university to use a wide range of resources and to enter into continuing partnership with other educational institutions in the preparation of teachers. Beyond this, however, the creation of teacher education centers directly benefit both Portland Community College and Oregon State University students by providing them with more opportunity to live, work and study in a wider variety of local communities and within their public schools.

The latitude of career choice and hence, school need, precludes that the program stands to succeed.

At this point in time, three considerations seem paramount for future development of the teacher education center:

1. Retaining of para-professionals in the program until they meet the stated levels of competency;
2. Expansion of the program to other interested community colleges;
3. Cooperation of other institutions of higher education in program development.

During the second year of operation one major problem facing the staff has been retaining those community college students who are enrolled in the para-professional program. Because of the opportunities for teacher aides in school districts, many students have been offered employment prior to their completion of the program.

Other community colleges have expressed their interest and desire to establish a program of this nature with Oregon State University. The problem in this age of financial crisis for institutions of higher education has been the ability of the four year institution to hire staff to place on location at a community college center.

Other institutions of higher education who prepare teachers for public and private schools see the need to establish centers. Institutions of higher education should join hands and have common centers in conjunction with the community college and the public schools to avoid unnecessary duplication. There is no reason why schools of education should not work together for the education of

prospective school personnel.

This new pattern of teacher education was designed to better accomplish the training of skilled, humanistic teachers for classrooms in a pluralistic society. Teacher preparation has the challenge to prepare teachers to cope effectively with change and diversity.

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